

## The changing status of French academics: what are their attitudes towards English as a language of research and instruction?

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## Colloque Doctoral International de l'éducation et de la formation

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# Enseignants-chercheurs : apprendre l'anglais pour enseigner en anglais. Quelles sont les attitudes des enseignants- chercheurs face à l'évolution de leurs statuts ?

### Résumé :

En France, les enseignants-chercheurs utilisent l'anglais pour écrire des articles scientifiques et pour participer à des colloques internationaux. Désormais ils seront également invités à enseigner des matières scientifiques en anglais. Comment vivent-ils ces différentes obligations d'employer cette langue dans le cadre de leur travail ? Lors de cette enquête sociolinguistique menée à la Faculté des Sciences de Nantes, des chercheurs ont partagé leurs sentiments vis à vis de leur vécu d'apprenants et d'utilisateurs de l'anglais sur une durée d'au moins 20 années. Les outils méthodologiques ont été des questionnaires, des narrations d'expérience en forme de 'journal intime de l'apprenant', des schémas en forme de *mind-map*, des tables rondes et des entretiens filmés et enregistrés. Cette étude socio-interactive s'appuie sur des théories d'identités professionnelles et communautaires (Zhang 2007, Meinhoff 2005, Wenger 1999). De plus, suite à cette campagne d'entretiens, certains enseignants-chercheurs ont pu s'exprimer sur leur vécu à propos de la loi Fioraso. Nous avons ainsi réfléchi sur l'impact qu'elle pourrait avoir sur les vies professionnelles au sein de la communauté scientifique internationale. Nous articulons donc nos réflexions autour de ces vécus d'enseignants-chercheurs (ponctués d'exemples) pour mieux comprendre les effets de cette interaction complexe qu'ils entretiennent par nécessité avec la langue anglaise. Une relation professionnelle avec la langue anglaise, comme vecteur de connaissances, peut en effet influencer des aspects identitaires, tels la vie personnelle, communautaire et relationnelle.

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# Enseignants-chercheurs : apprendre l'anglais pour enseigner en anglais. Quelles sont les attitudes des enseignants-chercheurs face à l'évolution de leurs statuts ?

*English title: The changing status of French academics: What are their attitudes towards English as a language of research and instruction?*

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to highlight some examples from a recent and ongoing socio-linguistic study carried out at Nantes science faculty. The participants, who are researchers at Nantes science faculty, France, were asked to reflect on how they had learnt English, how they used it today and how they perceived using it in the future. The context of the Fioroso law (2013) also meant that the participants of this study could imagine teaching their specialist subject in English in the near future. The recent law has had an impact on the interest in my own PhD study of how English is used and perceived by members of a scientific community. The qualitative data were helpful in answering the research questions: How do certain scientists at Nantes science faculty relate to a perceived obligation of having to use English at work, how does being part of a professional scientific community relate to attitudes to L2 English and how do individuals position themselves within the macro-institutional context of the Fioroso law (2013)? This paper will describe the current institutional legislation concerning the use of English in French higher education. The main arguments will be centred on how institutional, global and local attitudes come into play in one individual. The data for this study was collected via questionnaires, semi-directive interviews, mind-mapping, classroom observations and teacher journals. The methodology will be explained and a few examples of the arising data will be given. This socio-interactive study is based on theories of professional identity (Zhang 2007, Mondada 2013) where the individual is considered within communities of practice (Wenger 1999, Norton 2000).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 National, international and institutional attitudes to language legislation

There has been a recent proposal to legitimise and legislate for the use of English as an 'official' language of education and research in France. Part of the new *Fioroso law* (July 2013) put forward by the French socialist Minister for Higher Education and Research, Genevieve Fioraso, has legitimised the gradual trend of incorporating English into French Higher Education. Fioraso's aim was to reverse the Toubon Law (1994), which set limits on the amount of English used in education and elsewhere. The implications of the law would be that NN teachers may be expected to teach their specialist subject (in this case, Science) in English from September 2013.

The Fioroso law has overruled the Toubon law. This was mainly a formality as 37 universities were already teaching modules in English (Senatorial report March 2013). The difference in the new law is that it does not legislate against English, but legally allows any language of instruction in France.

‘La langue de l’enseignement, des examens et des concours, ainsi que les thèses et mémoires, dans les établissements d’enseignement supérieur, *peut être une autre langue que le français.*’ (my italics. L. 761-1 du code de l’éducation)

French universities have been making a gradual turn to incorporating English in a formal way over the past 20 years, regardless of the Toubon law. The students at Nantes science faculty have to do a minimum of 12 hours of English per semester, and an English module has as many credits as a Physics one. To qualify as a science primary and secondary teacher, teacher trainees must pass a certificate of English (TOEIC, CELTA, BULATS, TOEFL) to validate their final teacher’s qualification. At Masters’ level, students are required to read and summarise articles in English, as well as present papers and bibliographies in English. In the past 5 years, certain science modules have been taught in English, starting in year 2, such as the Advanced Biology Training module at Nantes university. Until 2013, these courses were technically illegal unless taught by a native speaker of English. There is no formal certification of a minimum standard or qualification of English for those teaching these science modules in France. This is in contrast to the university of Copenhagen who have in-house training for academic staff who wish to teach in English. This is complemented by the TOEPAS certification (Test of English Proficiency for Academic Staff).

Fioroso’s new legislation in conjunction with the Senate proposal entitled ‘*Pour l’attractivité de l’université en France*’ (In favour of the attractiveness of French Universities) will allow more courses to be run in English and for researchers to gain access to more help with English language skills so that they can compete with the international scientific community. In addition to this, French universities, who have seen a gradual decline in their budgets, are starting to look to overseas-student funding opportunities.

Ige’s study into how language functions as a symbol of group identity in Higher Education in South Africa offers an interesting perspective on language attitude and identity in a multilingual context (Ige 2010). Drawing from Gumperz (1982) he describes the importance of the self as negotiated within a community of learning: ‘The shaped ‘self’ employs language as a tool for exhibiting and making its presence felt” (Ige 2010:3047) but within a collective. This group identity can be called into question when two languages come into contact in a conflicting, dominant, or subordinate role in terms of what educational institutions deem the ‘proper’ language of instruction. This situation can be described as a *diglossia* where ‘two varieties of a language, identified as high (H) and low (L) varieties, have distinct social functions in the community” (Ige 2010).

‘The dominant language [Afrikaans/ English] is usually spoken by the group that holds political, cultural and economic power in the community. The others are regarded as minority languages (in terms of power relations), and are spoken by groups that hold less power and prestige” (Ige 2010:3048).

Ige refers to those who show ‘unwillingness’, ‘uncooperativeness’ in using the dominant language as presenting a ‘dissenting self’. In terms of resisting English to re-inforce minority identity to reject a regime, the resistance is driven by political resistance. Interesting parallels can be made with how English is becoming a Higher status variety within a French scientific community of English learners. Although the dominant political speakers are not physically present, it is recognised that English has to be used as the H variety for scientific exchange (articles and conferences). In terms of the motivation for learning the H variety, Ige’s points combine identity,

motivation and attitude to an L2 language: ‘The language users’ attitude toward the prestigious and less prestigious language(s) is likely to influence their willingness to *learn or use the different languages*’ (Ige 2010:3048, *my italics*). The motivation to identify with an H variety will reflect the language attitudes and choices of its speakers. The motivation can be strongly against or can be insufficient to encourage learning to take place. The participants at Nantes university have voiced varying degrees of motivation in relation to strong or weak identification with English H variety speakers.

This diglossic situation is emerging within French higher education, although at a slower pace than many of its European neighbours. The history of how France has legislated for and against English language use brings to light the function of language as an expression of ‘power, authority, and control’ (Blommaert (2006: 512) in Busch 2012: 506) where ‘the entanglement of language and the nation-state takes place not only through official language policy but also through language ideologies, through discourses on language, language use, and the legitimacy of speakers (Busch 2012: 506).

## **2.2 L1-L2 identity shifts within a community of practice**

An understanding of how communities of practice function on a local to international level is relevant to this study of a community of scientific research and instruction. Theories which consider individuals as members of different communities of practice, take into consideration both the continuous elements of identity as well as the different situated contexts where identities influence and are influenced by the social group in which they interact:

‘Building an identity consists of negotiating the means of our experience of membership in social communities. The concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other. It avoids the simplistic individual-social dichotomy without doing away with the distinction’ (Wenger 1998:145).

The extent to which French native speakers may feel a greater sense of belonging to an international community of English speakers, or speakers of an English as a *lingua franca* speakers is relevant to a study of L2 professional speakers. Studies have focused on how an international community of teachers of English feel about being non-native speakers (Blair 2012, Jenkins 2006). Membership can operate on local or global contexts as well as physical or virtual communities of practice formed within the domain of the internet, for example. By engaging with Wenger’s position that learning is a social phenomenon, learning English can be considered as a one of the ‘layering of events of participation’ (Wenger 1998:151). Whereby learning English coincides with other layers of participation, including learning ‘science’, *and* learning other subjects, *and* interacting with peers. With respect to teaching in English as a vector of communication of scientific content, the practices of other members of a same scientific community of teachers will have an impact on the attitudes of individuals who place themselves more or less within ‘an active participation’ in the practice of teaching a specialist subject in English. The feelings of membership in ‘familiar territory’ or claims to membership can be voiced or unvoiced and the members can be ‘actively participative, non-participative or indirectly participative’ (Wenger 1998:152).

Attitudes to membership can be both conflicting and coherent (Norton 2000 ). Multiple identities fit into each other, like a Russian doll (Meinhoff and Galinski’s 2005), but can be separated depending on need and context. A European identity, for example could be ‘one of several socio-political layers of identification’ (ibid: 199). Such identity appropriation can be used in opposition to a national identity, or put aside to favour a more local community. Norton (2000) and Ricento (2005) have referred to subtractive learning situations, especially in cases of immigration. The studies of



individuals participating in diglossic situations of this kind are revealing of the attitudes to an emerging L2 professional identity and whether they are perceived as a plus or a subtraction of the self.

Understanding the individual in terms of investment (Norton) into a professional learning community will be helpful in preparing for and then analysing the interaction which is also situated within a professional context.

### *2.3 Local salience, researcher involvement and the professional context*

The location of a particular study has been primordial to anthropological, and ethnological studies which have focused on communities in relation to spatial location (Levi-Strauss 1975, Benwell and Stokoe 2006, Piazza 2013). In terms of a study of a community of scientists in Nantes, we might ask ourselves how an equivalent community in Bordeaux or Sussex would relate to their identities in terms of everyday working location. Omoniyi (2006) has highlighted that people refer to salient moments depending on time, context and appropriateness. Schegloff (1991) argues that an analysis of identity need only address the elements brought up by the informants themselves. Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) reinforce this by choosing to ‘abide by what is patent in the development of the interaction’. This is what is meant by salience, where priority is given to the categories used by the participants themselves, rather than the ones which may have been attributed to them by others. Zimmerman refers to these aspects of the exchange as ‘oriented to’ elements of identity<sup>1</sup>. This does mean that, in the context of an interview, the researcher’s questions need to leave space for the orientations to be expressed.

Interaction studies have varying degrees of researcher involvement. Mondada’s studies involve filming the participants (so they are performing to camera in their own workplace). The degree to which the researcher is influential in an interaction, will vary from one study to another. Mondada’s participants may be influenced by the presence of the camera as are phone calls which are being recorded. Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) have commented on the degrees of researcher transparency with regard to the influence that they may have on the professional interaction under observation. Although conversational analysis has focused mainly on dialogue where the researcher is not part of the conversation (Zimmerman 1998, Mondada 2013), studies such as Meinhoff’s (2005), Norton’s (2000), Benwell & Stokoe (2006) and De Fina (2003) have accepted the researcher as a valid member of the interaction process. In terms of the agency of an interviewer in a semi-directive interview the agency of both parties should be taken into account in the interaction. Goffman describes oral, face to face interaction as ‘the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence’ (Goffman 1959: 26).

The ethnomethodological approach is appropriate to the study of professional identities as it is the study of ‘social life as the business that people conduct with each other, displayed in everyday practices’ (Antaki and Widdicombe 2008:1). How the participants in this study refer to their perceptions will be framed within theories of performed strategies (Goffman 1959, Butler 1998, Sartre 1946, Hodderson 2006, Bourdieu 1982) in that the context for the exchanges of this study are places where ‘performances’ can occur: an interactive classroom, round table discussion or interview. The display of identity combines elements of identity which can be left at home (Zimmerman) and other aspects of identity which are presented in the work place. Professional contexts have interactional codes and turn-taking rules (Mondada 2013), hierarchies, politeness and even dress code (Goffman 1959, Brown and Levinson 1978). Mondada refers to a struggle to acquire or to maintain status as well as status through specialist knowledge (K+/K-). The

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<sup>1</sup> In keeping with ‘oriented to’ identity attributes, I will therefore focus on elements which have been voiced by the participants themselves

conduction, (in the orchestral sense), of how the interview is lead by a researcher is based on a deficit of knowledge ( K + or K-) situation:

Researcher: I don't know what you think about having to use English at work (K-)

Participant: I will tell you what I think about having to use English at work (K+)

A conversation where the researcher is aiming to gain K+ by asking the right questions could also be described as a site of struggle, cooperation and negotiation (Norton).

In terms of gaining knowledge about identity, the interview alone may not result in the K+ that the researcher is looking for. This is why complementary methods to gain access to the complexity of situated identity can be used, such as longer written narratives that participants construct about their lives outside of the interview (Bailey 1996, De Fina 2003) or through the use of creating visual descriptions of the self through mind-mapping (Wheeldon and Faubert 2009) . These approaches will be developed on further in the methodology.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study describes a qualitative examination of native French speaking academics who are currently working at Nantes science faculty. By 'academics' I mean staff who work at a university and who teach the student population and take part in research projects. An online questionnaire was sent out to 328 participants who are part of a mailing list entitled '*enseignants-sciences*' (science-teachers) which includes all members of academic staff who teach as part of their job description. The questionnaire, which could be answered in French or in English asked for demographic details such as gender and age group as well as quantitative details about the contexts in which they used English for speaking (conferences, seminars, meetings) or writing (articles, emails, grant proposals). 118 academics responded to the questionnaire.

This 35.9% response rate to the online questionnaire was adequate but not significant enough to make conclusions about the academic staff population at Nantes science faculty. The respondents may differ from the non-respondents, so caution was necessary to avoid false generalisations. Some of those who chose to take part in the interview may have chosen to take part purely for the opportunity to practice their English or because they positioned themselves strongly against the Fioraso law.

The aim of the questionnaire was to verify that the hypothesis that academic staff used English for their research purposes. It was also a good way to establish a connection with the participants and to ask them if they wished take part in a further qualitative study<sup>2</sup>. The rationale for choosing this scientific community was that my experience of working in different disciplines as an English teacher and translator had shown that French academics who worked in the scientific domain were likely to be in contact with the English language. Unlike the disciplines of the Arts in France, most of the scientific articles are published in English. 28% of the participants were female and 63% of the participants were aged between the 25-45 year bracket. 96% of the participants responded that they used English to write articles and attend conferences abroad. Most the participants (68%) wrote directly in English and did not use translators. 68% of the participants said that they had written more than 10 articles in English. The response of 91% of the participants that they felt that they belonged to 'an international scientific community' corresponded to the theories relating to communities of practice mentioned in the literature review. Only 2.6% of the participants felt that

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<sup>2</sup> The last question of the online survey was ' Would you be interested in taking part in a further interview ? If so please add your name and email below. This lifted the animosity of the participant who I then contacted by email.

‘they didn’t need English to be successful at work’ which validated the hypotheses that the participants used English extensively and felt that it was important for their professional career. More than half of the participants (62%) said that they used English outside of work. This result was compared to how they chose to quantify the use of English in the private and professional domains during the interviews.

17 of these participants decided to pursue the survey further by taking part in an interview campaign conducted by myself from March to May 2013. The participants each took part in a semi-directive interview which was either video or audio-recorded depending on their preference. The participants signed a consent form after reading a participant information sheet about copyright and confidentiality clauses. During the interview the participants were asked to draw a mind-map which represented a quantitative description of estimated amounts of time spent using English in their personal and private lives. The average length of the interview was 25 minutes. One participant (Emma) was subsequently observed on three occasions when giving a bio-chemistry lesson in English (September 2013). She was also interviewed directly after her lessons and wrote a diary of her experience.

### **3.1 Interviewed participants**

The 17 participants were all non-native speakers of English and their first language was French. The participants were members of research laboratories in the disciplines of biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, geology, oceanography and IT. The participants were also members of faculty departments run by teams who organise and oversee the teaching of both undergraduates and postgraduates.

### **3.2 Data collection during the interviews**

During the audio or video recorded interviews, the participants were guided into the interaction with an initial question about what field they worked in. They were then asked about how they used English for their research. The participants were asked if they taught or had taught in English. They were asked if they were aware of the Fioraso law proposal. They were asked about how they felt about using English in general. They were invited to comment on how they used English outside of the workplace and whether English usage featured more in the professional or private domain for them. Due to the caution concerning the 35.9% response rate to the initial questionnaire, described above, I also asked the participants why they had decided to come to the interview. I also asked them whether they had any questions they would like to ask me regarding this research project as I thought they may reveal further attitudes to language.

The mind-maps were drawn when the question of the private and professional domain was asked. The participants were asked to show in which contexts they used English in both their professional and personal lives. Depending on their response to this activity, they were either done quickly during an explanation, or were drawn during a silent interval of the interview. One participant chose not to draw a mind map on the grounds that he did not like mind maps in general.

### **3.3 Rationale for using mind maps during the interviews**

The term mind-map is usually associated with a richer and more memorable way of recording ideas and the connections between them, than conventional linear notes. Buzan’s (1974) pedagogical model for learning by using mind maps as a memory aid instead of note taking is still widely used



today. This model enables learners to ‘brainstorm’ plans and link ideas together without being bogged down by sentence structures. Wheeldon and Faubert (2009) have reviewed the utility of mind (or concept)-mapping to help participants talk about the past without having to construct formal, written pieces. Omoniyi’s (2006) hierarchy of identity (HOI) model predicts that people will make salient choices about themselves and the world around them, and then categorise them from most relevant to least relevant. This subdivision is transposable to mind-mapping which can include ‘labelled concepts, linking words, and clear hierarchies’ (Wheeldon & Faubert 2009: 69). The immediate context (here the interview) will affect what categories the participants will evoke and how they organise what they wish to show as the most socially useful elements of their identity.

Other types of visual aids have been used as a point of reference during an interview. Mienhoff and Galinski (2005) use pre World War II photographs so as to stimulate memories. Omoniyi (2006) uses photographs and street signs to trigger reactions from participants. Where participants have to create the images themselves, the interviewee is asked to create a visual representation of their identities during an interview. Wheeldon and Faubert (2009) use concept maps created by interns and Busch (2012) uses body portraits painted by bilingual speakers. These media are then used as a point of reference in an interview.

In terms of the present study, the mind-maps were sometimes unsettling for the participants. The participants sometimes felt that they were expected to do a task that they had not properly understood. A few participants asked ‘what should I draw?’ Wheeldon and Faubert’s (2009) method of asking professional participants to draw mind maps a few weeks before the interview could be a good alternative to my approach during this study.

### **3.3 Data processing**

The interviews were transcribed and compared with the initial recordings. The mind maps were compared to the recordings and used to supplement the content of both the interview and the later analysis of the interaction. The transcripts were read for ‘curious examples’ (Prior 2010). These are parts of discourse which either highlight or contradict the research questions under study. The transcripts were analysed using complementary discourse analysis frameworks. Positioning theory, for example, analyses interactions for evidence of the speakers adhering or rejecting a given community, value-set, or even another speaker in the interaction. (Bamberg 2004, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008, Georgakopoulou 2007). The context of the interview and the agency and influence of the interviewer were also taken into account. Narrative theories of discourse analysis were also useful in placing the accounts into time frames which the participants used to describe language learner histories (Labov 1972, De Fina 2003 and Georgakopoulou 2007). The transcripts were also analysed for evidence of endangered language discourse (Reid-Collins 2013) whereby attitudes towards one’s own language (in this case, French) are set against possible Higher language varieties (in this case English) (Ige 2010) where a native speaker may reject adherence to a community of speakers, in a specific context such as this one.

The class observations were audio recorded and parts were transcribed for linguistic analysis. Emma was recorded interacting with her students in English and French. Emma was observed doing a similar bio-chemistry lesson in French to observe whether there were any notable differences in her performance or subsequent impressions.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First the academics generally reacted positively to the Fioraso law as an institutional change regarding the use of English in higher education. Second, there was considerable diversity among how the participants described their own personal history as language learners. Thirdly, they made comparisons between themselves and other members of their professional community. Fourth, they make a distinction between professional and non-professional English as a language of communication. Finally they made a distinction between their professional and personal lives in general, and negative affect towards English were sometimes described quantitatively in the mind maps.

### 4.1 Attitude to institutional language legislation

The interviews were carried out from March to May 2013 which was during the height of the debate around the Fioraso law proposal. Part of the interview was spent talking about the recent proposal and I asked the participants whether they could envisage teaching their specialist subject in English in the near future. Parts of the interviews were given over to reactions about the new law and how they felt their own professional lives would be affected by it. Six of the participants interviewed said that they were keen to start teaching their specialist subjects to undergraduates from September 2013. All the participants had already presented a paper at a conference and written a least one article in English. They all worked or had worked in English with PhD students who did not speak French. Four of the participants said they would not like to teach in English because they did not feel competent enough to do so. Ben expressed a strong opinion about English linguistic imperialism leading to a decrease in the quality and diversity of research produced. However he also expressed concern about how he would not wish his own children to suffer from not having a good level of English themselves.

#### 4.1.2 Attitude to teaching a science module in English

Emma described the lessons as more ‘fun’ when they were taught in English. Indeed, when she contacted me she expressed the desire to do the first lesson as a type of game. The novelty of this type of teaching attracted her and she also felt than speaking another language in this context added to the performance element of teaching in general. During the observation, she would translate ‘difficult’ words into French. When I asked her how she decided on which words to translate, she told me that she chose the words that she had found difficult herself in the recent past.

Emma and I disagreed about how much English language teaching was going on in her class. Whereas Emma felt the English was an added extra which could help the students in their professional career, she did not feel that she was teaching ‘English’. The analysis of the type of linguistic work going on in this type of non-linguistic content class is the subject of another ongoing project. The following exchange shows that she is checking and correcting her students’ linguistic competence throughout her exchange with them:

Emma: What will happen to the pH?

Student: It will *fall down*.

Emma: It will *decrease*.

Emma: How do you write the equation?

Student: pH *égal*..

Emma: Yes the pH *equals*...

(Observation of the *Buffer Solutions* lesson taught in English by Emma 13.09.13)

In the follow-up interview with Emma I commented on her method of giving the ‘correct’ English expression when a French one had been given. To me this was an obvious sign of L2 linguistic work going on (and not just scientific work). Emma is ‘being an English teacher’ (Richards 2006), not just a biochemistry one. The above extract would not occur in the French *Buffer solutions* lesson. It is unique to a *French* biochemistry class being taught in English.

Although I had asked her to describe how *she* felt about her recent teaching in English, Her diary entries tended to focus more on the students than herself. This was in keeping in the general attitude expressed by the participants that more teaching in English would be good for ‘our students’. She was interested in observing how the students responded to her (and in which language) and the difficulties that English would add to the content. The following extracts from her diary show that she is concerned about this added linguistic difficulty for her students and that the L2 took its toll on her own physical response (tiredness) when talking at length in an L2.

*The students were a bit embarrassed when I asked them to present themselves in English. They seem to have appreciated the game where they had to find the lab objects corresponding to the English labels I had given them. They seem to have understood my explanations about the experiments. (Translation of Day 1, Emma’s diary)*

*As soon as the students find it difficult to understand an experiment and they need to ask a question, they ask me if they can ask me in French. Does the use of English render the comprehension of the instructions more difficult? (Translation of Day 2, Emma’s diary)*

*At the end of the day, it is more difficult to speak in English because I am tired (translation of Day 2, Emma’s diary)*

The above entries show that Emma is concerned with how English might make the lesson harder for her students. Her overall impression at the end of the semester was nevertheless a positive one and she wishes to continue teaching in English. Her diary entries also reveal that she is addressing her reader as much as herself. The researcher’s research questions had influenced her own analysis. Emma’s equivalent lesson taught in French did not focus on code switching between languages. Indeed the French lesson seemed quieter as Emma didn’t need to repeat herself and the students did not whisper translations to each other. She did not start the French lessons with linguistic games.

## 4.2 Language learning histories

Positive or negative past language learning histories had an affect on how they viewed English today. Most accounts went back far into their childhood and were either punctuated with positive, negative or evocative elements which were perceived as a ‘good story to tell’ within the context of the interview. These were also the richest in cultural stereotypes and stories of ‘other communities of practice’ which they brought in to this other professional setting.

*I like English because I liked rock music as a child (Paul speaking in English).*

*My teacher had a silly accent and would say stupid things such as ‘the fox is on the fridge’ (Paul speaking in English).*

*The English teaching is bad in France and that's why we are behind (translation: Ben).*

*My origins are Breton and I was taught to not like English (translation: Vera).*

### 4.3 Positioning the self within the community

The participants positioned themselves within their local communities of practice or within more global communities of scientific practice, especially when referring to conferences they attended.

*[French] colleagues are more critical than other [native English speaking] people (Emma speaking in English).*

*The head of my lab is very good at English so I am embarrassed to speak English (translation: Ben).*

*I can do a presentation but I find it difficult to answer questions, the English [native speakers at conferences] don't make the effort (Jennifer speaking in English).*

### 4.4 English for Specific Purposes

The participants made repeated references to what they deemed 'scientific' English and 'general' English. It was also considered that 'scientific' English was easier than general English or what they referred to as 'every-day' or 'social English'. Some participants, such as David, went beyond this by saying that English was better than French for scientific discourse. Although English was described as a facilitator for international communication, it was also seen as a handicap to efficiency in the workplace.

*French is inelegant for science (David speaking in English).*

*We have to write in English so we know all the words in English (Max speaking in English).*

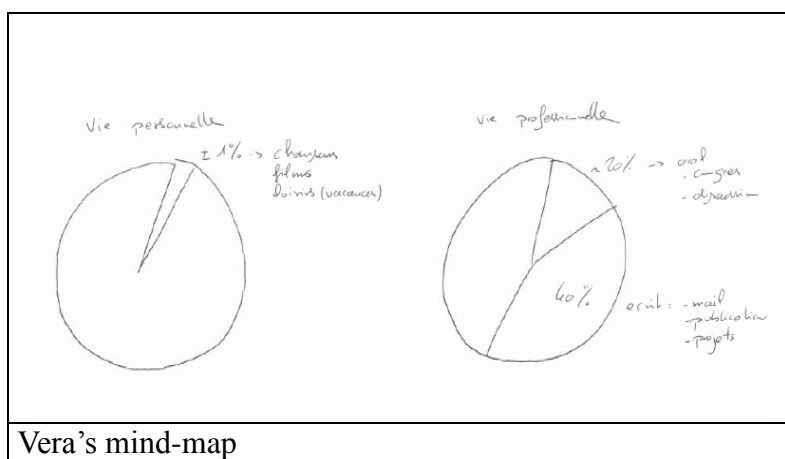
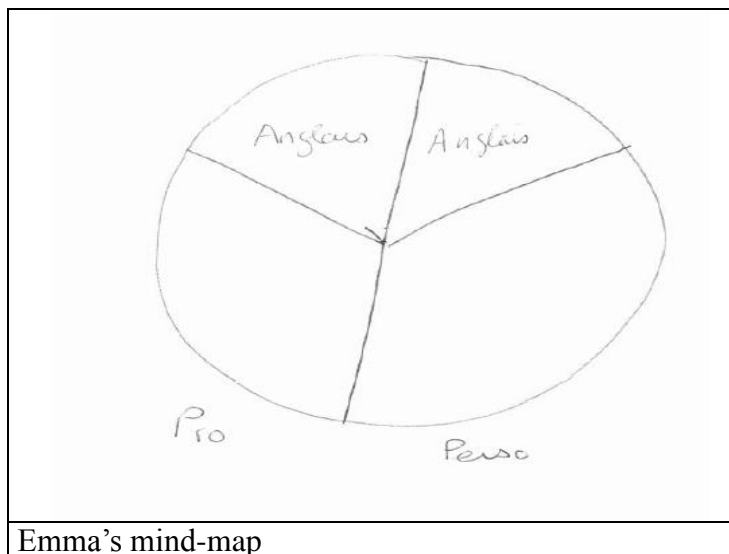
*I don't know how to write an article in French as we never write them in French (Emma speaking in English).*

*There is a difference between scientific and personal English. Scientific English is easy because I know the words...but I don't know how to speak at a conference dinner (translation: Vera).*

*If I could write my articles in French, they would be better and I could go faster (translation: Miriam).*

Professional contexts do give rise to specialist language. Specialist terminology has been the study of Zhang's definitions of business English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ESP and Business English are subjects taught at Nantes Science faculty and participants have made repeated references to what they deem to be ESP and General English. Zhang highlights the differences between professional and private terminology. Speakers will even vary verbs depending on which domain they are referring to: 'sell, manage, manufacture, deliver, confirm' for the professional and 'know, see, pray, feel, die, lie, marry' for the personal. According to Zhang, this is because the actions (verbs) and 'the goings-on of the two worlds are essentially different' (Zhang 2007: 404).

#### 4.5 Personal and Professional identities



The mind maps drawn during the interviews revealed that the participants made a distinction between the personal and professional spheres of their lives. Only two participants chose to make no distinction between the personal and private domain with regards to the quantity English took up in their visual description. The mind maps revealed an interesting distinction between the participants who claimed to use English more in the workplace. The participants who choose to focus on the professional context of English also described themselves as the least confident users of English. Those who referred to English taking up as much place in the personal as in the professional (such a Emma) were confident users of English and had a different affective response to using English. Their interest in English went beyond the personal-professional distinction and was not described in such detail in their professional sphere. The participant's perceived quantities reveal more about how they perceived English qualitatively.

In terms of the institutional rationale for encouraging a greater use of English within professional communities of learners, the mind maps disprove theories that institutional language reform of this kind will make the users more competent or confident. When comparing the participants' transcripts with their mind-maps, the mind maps reveal the attitudes to English as degrees of professional



burden which the participants have quantified. When I asked Vera why she had chosen to take part in this study, she told me that she wanted to tell me about her ‘mal-être’ with regards to how she positioned herself within a community of what she perceived as confident and competent users of English. Vera’s detail of how much she uses English at work reveals the weight of her negative affect. Read on their own, without the interview transcript, the map may be interpreted differently.

Riley (2007) makes the distinction between the terms identity, person and self, by dividing identity into two parts. The *self* is inwardly aware and private, and the *person* is presented to the public. The whole make up an *identity*. In Riley’s construct, ‘professional identity’ brings together the self and person, and they in turn interact with the professional context. The mind maps show how an individual may return to these subdivisions to describe differences between the self and the person. The mind maps are nevertheless poor examples of how they interact with the other (Coffey 2013).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate how some non-native speakers of English in a specific academic context described how they related to using English in their professional domain. The study aimed to collect attitudes to English as a Higher status variety in the wider international scientific community. The mixed methods approach including an initial quantitative survey, qualitative interviews, mind-mapping, classroom observations and diary entries offer a rich field of enquiry for language and professional identity studies. The current political currents in France also make it topical and relevant. Future work will concentrate on observing further participants of this study group, many of whom are starting to prepare their content courses so that they can teach in English. The recent Fioraso law has had a direct impact on academics. Whereas they previously kept English communication for their research peers, they are now potential teachers of their specialist subject in English. These new and emerging L2 teacher identities will prove to be a rich field for future research.

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